

The Elimination of Barriers Initiative (EBI) is a project launched by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) to identify public education approaches designed to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illnesses. California is one of eight pilot states selected to test models and public education materials – including radio, television and print public service announcements (PSAs). An evaluation of the impact of these test models and public education materials will be conducted and CMHS will distribute evidenced-based public education practices to states and communities across the country.

The California Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the California Coalition for Mental Health (CCMH) in partnership with CMHS launched the EBI in California. The EBI's goal is to promote greater acceptance of people with mental illnesses through a variety of public education and outreach activities, including public service announcements, speakers' bureaus, and targeted outreach to the business and education communities. California is not required to provide matching funds as a condition of participation in the EBI.

PSAs featuring real people who have experienced mental illnesses have been created for TV, print, and radio, in both English and Spanish, and will be distributed throughout the state. Based on the theme "Mental Health: It's Part of All Our Lives," the PSAs highlight strengths by portraying individuals common to most every community—a shopkeeper, a mother, a student, and a doctor—going about their everyday lives. They communicate that mental illnesses are common and that people with mental illnesses recover and serve as productive members of our communities. The PSAs are complemented by drop-in articles, a brochure, and a Web site, all of which will also be in English and Spanish.

California will also be reaching out to businesses in the state with the EBI's business toolkit, which will help human resources staff and managers better understand mental illnesses as well as create a more mental health friendly work environment for all employees.

DMH and CCMH have provided input in the development of the PSAs, drop-in articles and the business toolkits. Partnering together, CMHS, DMH and CCMH will distribute these materials in late May 2004.

To learn more or to get involved with the EBI, call the California Department of Mental Health's toll-free number at 1-800-896-4042. For more information about mental health, call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Mental Health Information Center at 1-800-789-2647 (English/Spanish) or 1-866-889-2647 (TDD).